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ABSTRACT

Ethnic studies programs, initiated in the recent past, have begun to wane in popularity. There are a number of possible explanations for this phenomenon. Ethnic studies programs have encountered the following stumbling blocks when implemented: (1) inadequate teacher preparation and commitment; (2) fragmented integration with other curriculum areas; (3) unresolved debate about content, grade levels and student populations who should participate in such courses of study; and (4) lack of community support. True multicultural education can resolve these difficulties. Multicultural programs are uncompartmentalized, diffusing across curriculum areas. They can and should be for all students at every grade level. They compare and contrast all people across all racial and ethnic lines. Teachers and the community can be encouraged to fully participate in multicultural education through a strong commitment on the part of school administrative bodies. (Author/MK)

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ETHNIC STUDIES - NO! MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION - YES!

Ethnic studies programs which were so popular in our recent past appear to have come and gone with little fanfare in many quarters. Some educators taking a conservative posture may have viewed these programs as curriculum "fads" which, like other curriculum fads, were destined from their inception to reach their apogee and then slowly decend into oblivion. To a certain extent, these harbingers of doom have been correct. The thrust to incorporate ethnic studies into curricula at all levels which was characteristic of the late '60's and early 70's appears to have come to a standstill. However, despite their limitations, ethnic studies programs made their impact and their influence is continuing to be felt. They represented a move toward a more realistic and relevant curriculum which takes into account the cultural diversity within our society and the need for a cognitive base which will foster among young people understanding of ethnic/racial minorities which make up America.

There are several possible explanations for the waning of ethnic studies programs which are worth examining. To begin with, the success of any program is highly dependent upon the committment of the teachers who will implement it. The rapidity with which many ethnic studies were incorporated into curricula may have precluded the careful and thorough design and implementation of inservice training experiences. Obviously, the inservice component can be

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

the key to the future success of any new program or strategy with which teachers may be unfamiliar or about which they are skeptical.

Many ethnic studies programs were accompanied by excellent teachers' guides. However, such guides often are only partially effective. They may provide the teacher with a background of knowledge needed for implementation of the program but stop there. Certainly, the teacher needs a strong knowledge base in order to be an effective leader and resouce for student learning. But unless there is a concomitant affective base, implementation likely will be ineffective.

Teachers, after all, are human beings first - a fact sometimes ignored by some curriculum planners, administrators and even the general public. As humans, they bring to the learning setting a complexity of feelings, emotions, attitudes, values, biases, and even prejudices as a result of their interaction with the world around them. If teachers are unconvinced that a program is "worth the effort," if their feelings and attitudes are negative toward this dimension of the curriculum, if inherent clashes of values exist which remain concealed, obviously no amount of cognitive input will overcome these obstacles. Teacher biases and prejudices can't be ignored or swept away by prescribing a reading list for the teacher or a course in ethnic studies at a nearby university.

The bridge between the cognitive and affective dimensions of the individaul tends to be elusive, undefined, and ethereal. Knowledge does not always lead to understanding and aprreciation. An inservice

program which either ignores or fails to deal adequately with teacher feelings is incomplete. If committment to a program is what is needed for its success, then teachers need to have experiences which will enable them to examine their own attitudes and develop positive feelings about the program's worth and which will cause them to set priorities in their classrooms which will include implementation of the components of the target program. Until a strong, positive affective base undergirds the program, effectiveness will be minimal at best.

Programs which have little teacher input may find implementation a thorny process. Many ethnic studies program were developed by consultants outside of the school system in which they were to be used. Most often, these consultants represented particular minority groups. Certainly such contributions are valuable. Black studies programs should have the input of Black educators; Native American studies should reflect the thought and concerns of Native Americans, and so on. Unfortunately, however, many programs may have smacked of certain biases and prejudices and, whether true or not, may have been viewed as the result of pressure tactics employed by certain factions within the community. Under these circumstances, teacher negativism is likely to set in. In many cases, this is what happened. When teachers perceive programs as imposed from without, resistance may run at a fever pitch and may not be tempered by even the best efforts of the supervisory and administrative personnel of the district.

Certainly time pressures work against the implementation of any "extras" which are tacked on to the curriculum. In order to avoid this pitfall, career education programs, for example, have been filtered into the curriculum via supplementary readers, aspects of the language arts program or as part of existing social studies curricula. Similarly, ethnic studies may crop up in almost any component of the curriculum perhaps, but most often in the social studies. Even in the latter case, however, articulation with the rest of the social studies program may not be smooth. Consequently ethnic studies programs may result in fragmented and compartmentalized learning. For example, they may appear as a two-week unit to be disposed of as quickly as possible and forgotten the remainder of the year.

It is popular to study "Indians" around Thanksgiving time. (Pupils may learn that Squanto helped the Pilgrims grow corn!) It is better to omit the study of "Indians" (or any other group) if pupils are to be left with only partial knowledge which leads to distortions and misconceptions. There is so much more to Native American studies than isolated and unrelated facts. Unfortunately, teachers still teach that Columbus <u>discovered</u> America and pupils are amazed to learn that Indians are alive and well today. Ask pupils if Indians can be cowboys (actually many are these days), and you will have some notion of the confusion which clouds the study of America's first inhabitants. Similarly, it is an injustice to "study" Black people around Martin Luther King's birthday only to

neglect the history, heritage and significant contributions to our nation made by Black people during the remainder of the school year.

Another stumbling block to the success of ethnic studies would appear to be rooted in the controversy over WHAT should be included, for WHOM, and WHEN. Let's consider each of these questions separately.

What should be included in ethnic studies programs is a matter of continuing debate. It is apparent that America's population is exceedingly diverse and that the content of ethnic studies will need to be delimited in some way. Within Texas alone, for example, there are Chicanos, Blacks, Germans, Czechs, and several Indian tribes, to name the major groups. Programs which attempt to include too much will not be effective and certainly will not promote a depth of understanding of any of the groups.

Unfortunately, in the minds of the public and educators alike, ethnic studies programs have been linked with the particular group or groups included in that program. Black studies have been considered appropriate for Black students; Chicano studies for Chicanos, and so on. Some insightful individuals have perceived that the White middle class student may need ethnic studies most of all. But by and large there was (and still is) a tendency to place ethnic studies programs only in schools serving minority populations.

When to implement these programs also has been a problem. Ethnic studies are far more frequent at the secondary level than in the elementary school. When found in the elementary grades, often ethnic studies are part of the intermediate social studies program.

Seemingly little attention has been given to implementing ethnic studies in kindergarten and the early primary grades. Again, this is unfortunate and unrealistic. Pupils live in a pluralistic society and are well-aware of differences in skin color, features, etc. at an early age. There is a real need for building an understanding of and appreciation for diversity at the earliest educational levels.

Lack of community support may have scuttled some ethnic studies programs. For the many reasons cited in this article as well as resistance to anything new and general apathy, the necessary community committment may have been withheld. Perhaps the fault has rested with public relations programs in our schools. It is also possible that the blame lies with the orientation of the school staff. Or maybe society is not "ready" for school programs which may elicit discomforting questions from students. For whatever reason, ethnic studies programs by and large have failed to rally the support needed for their successful implementation and continuance.

Perhaps what is needed is not a new program but a new orientation. Such an orientation has surfaced and is labeled "multicultural education." The remainder of this article will attempt to build a rationale for making multicultural education a reality for all students.

It would seem imperative at this point to describe what is meant by multicultural education as it is used here. Multicultural

education compares and contrasts all people across racial and ethnic lines in an open atmosphere that is uncritical and free from value judgements. It studies diversity across cultures, examines the strengths and contributions of each, and promotes cultural pluralism as the ideal posture for society. It differs from ethnic studies in that generally the latter program offers an in-depth study of a racial or cultural group (Black American, Mexican American, Native American, etc.) Even the term multiethnic would seem to be a less desirable label as it may carry the notion of compartmentalization characteristic of ethnic studies programs in general, rather than diffusion throughout the curriculum. Multicultural education is the broader term and actually it encompasses ethnic studies which may provide much of the cognitive input for the program. But multicultural education goes beyond a content base. It is an orientation which begins in the teacher's mind and permeates the entire curriculum. The implementation is accomplished by a sensitive and perceptive teacher who is alert to possibilities for "multiculturalizing" the existing curriculum on a day-to-day basis. Hopefully, this should answer the question concerned with the <u>what</u> of multicultural education.

Now let's consider the questions which address themselves to the problems of <u>for whom</u> and <u>when</u>. It is the position of this writer that multicultural education can and should be for <u>all</u> students at <u>every</u> grade level. We simply must get away from the notion that it is just for minority students or students in certain

schools and at particular grade levels. All students eventually live and will work in a culturally pluralistic society. Therefore, it would appear to be the obligation of schools to help students acquire strong cognitive and affective bases which will enable them to function successfully in a world of diversity. Obviously, this is a challenge which cannot be met in a six-weeks social studies unit at one or more grade levels. Rather, Bruner's model of the spiral curriculum would seem more appropriate in which basic concepts and generalizations are introduced in the early grades and understandings are deepened and broadened through the grades as different content and experiences are utilized.

If a district or school is truly interested in multiculturalizing the curriculum, then perhaps some guidelines can be useful in order to accomplish this goal. The beginning point is a strong committment on the part of the community, the school administration, and the teachers. It is apparent that this is a surmountable but difficult obstacle. However, if not hurdled successfully, the project may be doomed to failure from the outset. Regardless of where the thrust for multicultural education originates, with a group of teachers, school administrators, an enlightened school board, a parents' group, etc., a good "selling job" will need to be done so that support is forthcoming from all levels.

Given that this is accomplished to a sufficient degree, then resource guides will need to be written to enable teachers to capitalize on opportunities to provide a multicultural emphasis at

all levels. Local teachers must be involved so that the program is not imposed upon them but rather developed by them. Outside consultants, of course, can and should enhance the process considerably. But teachers within the district are the ones who understand the local situation best including the orientation of the community, the existing curriculum and the needs of students. Ethnic studies guides can be helpful as resources if these can be obtained from districts having such programs. Librarians may be able to suggest multiethnic books and other media which might be germane to the program. The state department of education, colleges and universities, community agencies and the like may be tapped for assistance in the project. Perhaps most important to note is that the product of these efforts should not be a curriculum guide for a new curriculum component. Instead, it should contain suggestions for adapting the existing curriculum including resources which will help students build understanding of and appreciation for diverse peoples, for implementing activities which will strengthen the bond between the community and school and for evaluating all materials in the classroom to avoid those which tend to perpetuate biases and stereotypes or otherwise show or imply that diversity is negative. The multicultural education resource guide should include background information for the teacher to enable him/her to serve as a resouce for students and to guide student learning effectively. Further, the guide should contain a variety of suggestions for activities to promote affective learning. Dramatic activities, such as role playing, are useful in

values exploration. Experiences out in the community, for example, older students working in an after school recreation program, can be important in enabling students to interact successfully in a multicultural setting.

In addition to the preparation of a guide in which local teachers have had a part, an inservice education program is an important consideration. Such a program should deepen teachers' understanding of cultural and linguistic differences and alert them to a greater variety of possiblities for promoting cultural pluralism in their classrooms. Outside speakers can enhance the curriculum and make better use of community resources. Ways to bring the community into the schools and to bring the school to the community are numerous and should be included in the inservice component. Teachers who lack interest in, knowledge of and committment to multicultural education simply will be ineffective in multiculturalizing the school curriculum.

The thrust that multicultural education will take can and should differ according to the local setting. Certainly minority students should be helped to maintain and extend their pride in and identification with their own heritage. Thus the knowledge base for the program must take into account the minority groups present in any given community and extend from there. But just as ethnic studies have been too restricting, attempts at multicultural education which stop short of including a major portion of the great diversity found within American society may be ineffective.

Within the K-12 curriculum, opportunities will abound for including the study of diversity in a great many contexts. Keep in mind, too, that multicultural education is more than an add-on to the social studies program. For maximum effectiveness, it should permeate everything that is included in the curriculum.

If multicultural education is to succeed and endure as a national thrust, it must be demonstrated that it adds a valuable dimension to the education of all students. Those of us who believe in it, of course, feel that it will. Present day society is culturally pluralistic. Persons who are members of minority groups are becoming better educated, better trained and socially mobile. Students in schools presently will live among and work with people of vastly differing racial and ethnic backgrounds, from different family organizations and employing various methods of child rearing, and utilizing a variety of linguistic codes. Rather than a fad or a frill, it may well be that multicultural education will emerge as an important key to the very survival of the American way of life and the realization of the great American dream.